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Speech Training for the Physician

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Another College President Speaks on Speech

by PAUL R. ANDERSON, *President**
Pennsylvania College for Women
(Ohio Wesleyan, 1928)

One of the obvious, and sometimes overpowering, obligations of the college president is that of speech-making. There are people who seem to believe that college presidents can speak on almost any subject at the drop of a hat. Since trustees, "friends of the college," and public relations are involved, for one to refuse even the impossible is difficult. So the average college president speaks once or twice a week and this in addition to whatever other commitments he may have on and off the campus. He can either learn to speak with comparative ease or his life is miserable.

My college speech training has been invaluable, of more practical utility than anything else I took. We were sometimes treated rather roughly (at least we thought so) after alighting from the platform in speech classes. We were forced to investigate subjects thoroughly and this took time. But as is true with all experiences which are really meaningful our capacities were taxed, and we hence learned a great deal.

The most important thing I learned from my speech training is self-confidence. The average person hates the thought of standing up before a group of people to make a speech and may go through all kinds of physical and mental anguish in the process. Most of us who have had a significant amount of speech training are aware of the hazards but know they are not unsurmountable. I can even eat with pleasure before I speak now. I regard this as an accomplishment.

Almost equally important in my experience was the training I received in intellectual discipline. Most formal education is entirely too much concerned with analysis and understanding. I majored in philosophy and I believe I had good training in this field. But I believe I had even more opportunity to exercise my intellectual muscles in argu-

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Speech Training for the Physician

by ORMOND S. CULP, M.D.,
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Rochester, Minnesota

Few individuals are more dependent on rapport with fellowmen than medical practitioners. Patients, relatives, trainees, colleagues and contemporaries constitute a source of seemingly endless inquiries that cannot be ignored. From examining room to county or national meeting, the physician of today is expected to provide lucid answers to perplexing and poignant questions. Yet the average physician is notoriously inept at self-expression.

There has been much controversy among educators regarding the subtle balance between "humanities" and "science" in the premedical curriculum. While it is generally agreed that tomorrow's physician needs more than a maze of formulas, equations and nomenclature to practice "the healing art," opinions differ regarding the most desirable supplementary courses. One cannot detract from the intrinsic value of a host of subjects, but it is regrettable that very little attention has been focused on the potential importance of speech training in premedical education.

Too frequently, speech training is viewed solely as a prerequisite of the polished orator. Its cardinal virtues are much more elusive. Courses in debate and extemporaneous speaking help one to think logically, to recognize significant issues promptly, to regiment facts quickly, to state opinions concisely and to be less ruffled by "pressure" or extenuating circumstances.

Many decisions must be made without delay in the conference room as well as in the operating theater. Frequently, there is no avenue for subsequent retreat. Various alternatives must be considered in proper perspective. The physician may weigh evidence with his conferees or merely have a silent debate with his own conscience. But clear thinking, critical evaluation of all points of view and logical decisions usually enhance the patient's future. The practice of medicine is far from stereotyped and the soul-searching

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*A brother of Hurst Anderson, who appeared in our last issue. Paul Anderson was formerly Professor of Philosophy and Dean at Lawrence College, Wisconsin.

Books in Review

FREEDOM AND LOYALTY IN OUR COLLEGES. By Robert E. Summers. New York: H. W. Wilson Company, 1949 (The Reference Shelf: Vol. 26, No. 2), p. 214. \$1.75.

Another in the Reference Shelf series, this particular volume is both interesting and controversial. Robert Summers, veteran of many previous volumes in this group, presents both sides of the question in more or less equal terms. In addition he adds a personal introduction to each of the sections.

The first, and probably the weakest section, deals with "Communism and Natural Security." In trying to narrow the general area down to the specific topic under discussion, the author has omitted many of the better references. It is always a calculated risk when trying to limit a question that this will happen.

The sections on "Indictments Against the Schools," "Federal Investigation of Education," and "The States and Subversion" are handled with skill. Summers does a good job of presenting a balanced group of comments on these touchy subjects.

Possibly because of their nature, the next group of three, "The Loyalty Oath Battle," "The Fifth Amendment Controversy," and "The Broader Issue—Academic Freedom," are not as clear cut. The tendency seems to be to go along with extremists on both sides of these questions. Not that this is necessarily bad, but it does make it difficult to get a clear picture of exactly what issues are specifically under consideration.

The last chapter deals with "Time for Decision," which sums up the problem and its many parts. Both the author himself, and writers picked to represent various points of view, try to come up with an acceptable solution. Invariably the answers come out to be weak enough for many on both sides to accept, but hardly sufficient for the extreme Left or Right.

An over-view of the book leaves a very favorable impression, especially if one is seeking historical background. Many of the less publicized cases are covered in detail, which makes for excellent reading, especially for those whose knowledge is limited on the subject.

The articles are worth while in most cases, if the reader keeps reminding himself that many of these authors have an ax to grind. For a person who wishes to start his work with a book that will give a diversification of viewpoints, this could well be the book. The bibliography in the rear of the book also gives a lengthy list of references which are not covered in the text, should one desire to use it only as a means to independent reading.

CHARLES S. GOETZINGER,
Kansas State College

College President Speaks

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mentation and debate. We seemingly couldn't participate. We felt we had to know what we were talking about, what our best case was, and what its essential weaknesses were. This training has been helpful in almost every administrative problem I face, for I realize there are two sides to every problem and the only question is "which is the best?"

My speeches may not always be the best and my administrative judgments may not always be the wisest, but I hate to think how much worse both would be had it not been for speech.

The Physician

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questions which patients and families ask can tax anyone's professional and tactful ingenuity.

Most physicians are now involved in some type of teaching program. This may vary from informal ward rounds with assistants to lectures in medical centers or talks before sundry societies. Time spent in the speech department pays gratifying dividends, irrespective of the size of the audience. Unfortunately, even brilliant research can be lost temporarily in the haze of poor public presentation.

Speech training alone cannot make it possible for a physician to cope with the bizarre, to convince the skeptic or to do justice to his topic—but from limited personal experience I know that it helps. Would that I had more of it at the opportune time!

He who knows only his own side of the case, knows little of that. —J. Stuart Mill